

Ok but what if... Mike was really homophobic... by the_angry_pixie

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Abusive Relationships, Angst, Bullying, Closeted Character, Dubious Consent, Homophobia, Implied/Referenced Self-Harm, M/M, References to Depression, Self-Destruction, Self-Hatred, Sexual Repression, i swear this is not as horrible as it sounds...

Language: English

Characters: Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Will Byers & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-04-29

Updated: 2018-04-29

Packaged: 2022-04-22 04:42:40

Rating: Mature

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 6,238

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Bear with me, I'm going somewhere with this I swear. And the way is
BYELER

Ok but what if... Mike was really homophobic...

Author's Note:

This started as a story prompt for other writers. Then it became like a HC post, and now its like a weirdly formatted 6000 word wholeass story. I didn't mean for it to get so long...

An Extra Warning - this fic explores and deals with homophobia, abusive behaviour, self-destructive/self-hate behaviour, bullying, hate speech/slurs and dub-con. Let me be explicit, MIKE displays all of these tendencies in this fic. Please do not read if you don't think this will be your cup of tea. Please keep yourself safe and heed the warnings.

- ok so its like an AU where the upsidedown and Eleven didn't happen
- what if Mike broke from the group when they entered high school
- like what if instead of puberty hitting him in all the wrong ways, it instead hit him in all the *right* ways. maybe those long limbs earned him a spot on the basketball team and he becomes a bit of a jerkish popular jock
- further to that, what if... what if he joined in on the bullying of Will in a BIG way
- Will was being teased for being a "fairy" before any of that upsidedown business happened. That's a canonical fact.
- Of course Will is devastated the first time Mike calls him a "fag" and stands by as two other jocks push him to the ground and throw his bag in the garbage
- Of course he doesn't know what to do when he sees Mike among the group of individuals hightailing it away from his locker, spray-paint can in hand, as Will approaches and beholds the slurs and horrible

drawings graffiti-ed across his own and the neighbouring lockers

- he can take the other guys being jerks but Mike, who he has practically known all his life... he doesn't know how to respond to that, he doesn't know how to fight back against that.

- Its not even like he ever even told Mike the truth about his sexuality. Will was careful to hide his feelings. There's no way he *could* know... so why does Mike always act like this is personal? Like Will is personally offending him just by existing?

- it goes on for years. Will getting by as best he can with the constant bullying and the help of Dustin and Lucas who remain by his side, even after he tells them the truth, that all the rumours are true, that he is what they say he is.

- it all comes to a head one night. Will walking through town after seeing a movie with the guys. He thinks he will go visit his Mom at work and bum a ride home hopefully. He see's the group of jocks hanging out in the street, Mike among them, arm around some anonymous girl. They look rowdy, they look drunk. Will is nervous and crosses the road ducking into an alley to take an alternative route. He doesn't know that Mike saw him.

- He thinks he's home free when he emerges from the mouth of another alley, but Mike is waiting for him, leaning against the wall in the shadows. He pushes him back into the alley with a "*where do you think you're going Byers?*"

- Will is somewhat relieved to see Mike is alone, maybe he can be talked out of whatever he has planned. And so he isn't ready for the first shove that smacks him back against the brick wall.

- "*I asked you a question Byers! Where the fuck do you think you're going?!*" and Will can see fire blooming in Mike's eyes as he tries to sidestep him but only gets shoved back against the wall again, this time banging his head so hard that black splotches swim in front of his eyes

- And suddenly all of Mike's 6'3 frame is pinning Will against the wall and he can smell the alcohol on his breath

- "Please Mike..."

- *"Shut up faggot! Is that what you're doing back here. Meeting one of your faggoty friends? Sucking his cock like the fucking disgusting queer you are?"*

- The terror is building inside Will. He never thought he would ever feel this way around Mike but here they are and he feels like his lungs might be collapsing

- "Mike..."

- *"You think you're better than me don't you. That you're above it all. The way you walk around that school. Looking the way you do. But you're wrong. I know what you are. You're nothing. I **am** better than you, in every fucking way. I **am**."*

- "Mike please..."

- But there are fingers clutched around his jaw and Will's eyes are wide open as there are suddenly lips mashed against his. A tongue violently invading his mouth and teeth clacking painfully against his own.

- The kiss is brutal and furious and tastes of cheap booze. Nothing gentle or affectionate about it. But for a moment Will forgets every horrible thing that has ever happened to him at the hands of the boy in front of him because...

... because he doesn't think he has ever heard anything as... as **sad** as the anguished groan that almost sounds like it is being ripped from Mike's throat.

- Will remains perfectly still, neither participating in the kiss or pulling away from it. He couldn't even if he wanted to. Mike's grip is just so desperate.

- Slowly the taller boy pulls away. His eyes are bright and wild as he steps back panting heavily.

- Will can't move, can barely think, his head is throbbing and he needs time to process what just happened. Mike's voice is low and

threatening and slashes through the silence.

- *"If you tell anyone, I'll fucking kill you."* And with his sleeve rubbing harshly against his mouth, he runs away.

- So now Will knows Mike's secret. And everything makes a little more sense, but not a lot.

- And he could have left it at that. Gone on as usual and never acknowledged what had happened in that alleyway ever again.

- But Will can't. This is Mike... and no matter what he's become... to Will he is *still* that boy that was his best friend for years. Who he used to patch up whenever he would do something reckless like ride his bike with no hands or climb a tree that was way too flimsy to hold his weight. The boy who had cried and admitted to him that he sometimes felt so lonely when he went home from sleepovers it was like his insides were clenching in on themselves... trying to turn him inside-out, or maybe make him disappear altogether. The one who never made fun of him for being afraid of the dark and sometimes even held his hand as they fell asleep beside each other...

... the one he had been well on his way to falling in love with before Mike had... become what he'd become.

- So he pursues it. He approaches the bear completely ready to poke. But Mike doubles down on either pretending he doesn't exist, or throwing insults at him like he is being paid for it. Will can't seem to get a moment alone with him.

- and so Will bites the bullet and sneaks into Mike's room to wait for him to get home from practice one night. It's no trouble, they used to climb through each others windows all the time before...

- at first Mike does not react well. He rages, he threatens, he denies. But he doesn't lay a hand on Will. And that is his trump card. As long as Mike doesn't physically hurt him, he can take the verbal beating. He knows Mike is confused. And he knows how scary that can be.

- and so he accepts Mike's weak-at-best excuses. That he was drunk and didn't know what he was doing. That he was horny because Sally

Davidson had cock-blocked him earlier that night. That Will was so goddamn girly looking that anyone could get switched around on a dark night. Will sits on Mike's bed and nods with a wry eyebrow raised that he *knows* Mike sees and then.... he leaves. He makes sure to make eye contact with Mike before ducking out the window though. Tells him if he ever needs to talk, he'll be there.

- things don't necessarily improve for Will after that... but that doesn't mean that he doesn't notice that Mike is no longer an active participant in his bullying. Maybe its just a coincidence that Mike just happens to never be around. Will chooses to believe it isn't. But he has to test the theory. He has to push a little harder.

- So he takes another chance and climbs through Mike's window a second time about a week later. He doesn't allow Mike enough time to cuss him out this time. Just sits on the edge of his bed and starts chatting away as if they are good friends. As if nothing's changed. He asks him about Holly. He asks him about Nancy. His parents. He asks how practice went. Has Mike thought about college yet. Etc etc.

- To his utter surprise, Mike stares at him for a long time, sighs, collapses into his desk chair, spins around a bit staring at the ceiling and... begins to talk

- He finds out that Holly is an insufferable terror that Mike hates to love. That Nancy stopped checking in after awhile and barely ever comes home for holidays. He finds out that Mike still hates Ted's fucking guts and also hates that he wants to impress him so much. He finds out that Karen drinks too much and that Mike keeps a stash of confiscated bottles under his bed that he has no guilt about dipping into on nights where he feels like it. He doesn't learn anything about basketball practice because "*what the fuck would you know about sport faggot?*" And he learns nothing about college because apparently Mike doesn't like to think about the future too much because "*whats the point...?*"

- Will leaves again the way he came. There are no pleasantries, no "*we should do this again*". Just an instinctual *knowing* that Will has to keep pushing whatever this is. Because there is something desperately *wrong* with Mike. He can feel it.

- but he doesn't know what he can do. He talks about it vaguely with Dustin and Lucas, carefully leaving Mike's name out of it. It is Dustin that first floats the word "*depression*" into the conversation. And it fits. And it scares Will.

- Will hasn't had cause to observe Mike closely for a long time. But he observes him that week. Observes how he almost seems glassy-eyed and not present when he sits at lunch with his friends. How a frown creases between his eyebrows when Sally leans over to kiss him that disappears before she leans back and has a chance to see it. That the only time he seems genuinely happy is when he is on the court and he is concentrating so devastatingly hard on bringing his team success.

- And if Will's heart just happens to flutter a bit with the new intimate knowledge of just how sharp Mike's cheekbones have become, or the cute way he wipes sweat from his brow, or how his lips go cherry red after he's been chewing on them... well that's another thing entirely and not what matters right now.

- Will was just considering whether he should visit Mike's windowsill a third time when a mysterious note appears in his locker. "*Come help me with my science homework nerd. Wednesday night. I'll leave the window open. - M*" and Will's heart just might do a little dance.

- It quickly becomes apparent that Mike does not need any help with his science homework. He knows most of the answers when Will tries to quiz him. Maybe Will shouldn't be surprised. Mike had always been smart, no matter what sort of meatheaded company he keeps these days. But then if he didn't need help, then why was Will here?

- He keeps the charade going though because he can't deny, Mike being nice to him is a bit of an addictive activity. And he is being nice, all condescending comments about nerdism aside. He hasn't called him faggot *once* tonight. That's progress!

- He even asked about Will's mom as he was leaving that night. And so, with one leg hanging out the window, bewildered expression on his face, Will tells him that Joyce is well. That she smokes too much and worries about Jonathan at college, and puts too much effort into yelling at Lonnie on the phone to pay child support, and wishes Will

and the boys would hold their D&D campaigns at their house instead of Lucas's because she doesn't like Will biking home late at night

- Is it just Will's imagination or does Mike's face almost look wistful as he talks on? Mike blinks it away pretty quickly though as he scoffs and turns away from the window. *"whatever, later nerd"*. And that's that.

- Life goes on. Mike still pretty much ignores him at school. But Will will take that over the bullying any day.

- The second time things come to a head is again late at night with Mike drunk, and Will completely sober. He's just finished a campaign, but chosen to not sleepover at Lucas' like Dustin. And so he's walking his bike in the dark, enjoying the crisp evening and the view of Ursa Major. Must be close to 1am when a car screeches past him.

- Curious, he pauses at the end of a cul-de-sac. Of Mike's cul-de-sac he notes with interest. He watches as the car pulls up outside Mike's neighbour's house. Watches as a figure stumbles out of the car. Notes a few laughs and cheers emerging from inside the car and then watches in horror as the car pulls away and drives off.

- He knows instinctually that the figure is Mike, and he can gather that he must be drunk by the slumped way he is down on one knee, hands to the grass and appears to just be staring at the ground breathing.

- What kind of fucked up friends just *leave* like that?! Not even helping him inside?! Not even making sure they are in front of the right fucking house!!

- Will is full of indignant anger! And it is this anger that drives him to march over and bend down and ask if Mike is okay.

- *"Where the fuck did you come from??"*

- *"Doesn't matter, can you walk? C'mon big guy, lets walk."*

- Will is so fucking grateful the door to the basement is unlocked. The state that Mike's in, he's fairly sure they couldn't have handled a

quiet entrance through the front door, and *definitely* not sneaking through Mike's second story bedroom window.

- He does not expect the rush of nostalgia that momentarily overtakes him as soon as he lays Mike down on the same old couch that was there when he was 10 fucking years old.

- Rinses out a cup at the same old laundry tub and fills it with water for Mike. Walks past the same old shelves laden with familiar board games - though they appear to be collecting dust... its all a bit discombobulating

- There are a few differences of course. Will can see the old playing table and chairs stacked into a corner. The comics that used to stand proudly on the shelves by the board games have disappeared. Probably in storage or maybe even given away...

- He looks to the boy in front of him as he puts the cup on the coffee table. Probably the most changed thing of all in this dusty old basement.

- *"Do you still write Mike?"*

- *"Huh?"* Mike's head doesn't even lift from where it is leaning against the back of the couch. Will stands awkwardly off to the side. Not sure if he should sit or not. He feels like he's invading.

- *"Like short stories. You used to write these really neat short stories. Do you still do that?"*

- He watches as Mike's brow furrows in concentration. After a short silence Mike utters vehemently *"Course not. Writing's for faeries"*.

- *Of course it is.* Will thinks sourly. *Why do I even fucking bother?* He feels angry and tired and suddenly a great yearning to be home. To be away from here.

- He starts to shuffle towards the door, not really looking forward to the cold ride home, but he feels like he's done all he needs to do here. Time to go-

- *"At least, that's what Ted always says..."*

- Will pauses at the doorway and looks back. Mike's head has popped up over the back of the couch. His eyes look wide and stricken, like he's shocked to see Will leaving.

- *"Ted's an asshole"* Will murmurs.

- Mike chews on his lip for a few moments. *"I know. I hate him. But... he doesn't like me either so I guess fairs fair."* Mike turns and sits properly on the couch. With only the view of the back of his head, Will hears him mutter. *"It's funny, I always thought parents were meant to at least **like** their children but I guess mine are the exception..."*

- He sounds more sober. And Will considers keeping on walking but... the way Mike is sitting... he looks so small, so lonely and so... haunted. Will carefully approaches and sits at the very opposite end of the couch.

- *"I'm sure Karen likes you..."* he tries to reassure but Mike is already shaking his head.

- *"Karen is in no state to like **anyone**. She checked out on emotions a long time ago... I guess she passed that along to me right? Not just the drinking habits. How twee."*

- *"Mike..."* Will doesn't really know what to say.

- *"Nancy**definitely** doesn't like me... doesn't talk to me anymore. She says I've changed. Says who I've become is ugly or rotten or... something like that so... that's another person to add to the party."* At this Mike pauses to stare at his clasped hands before letting out a barking laugh that has Will worrying about him waking the people upstairs. *"Fuck man!"* Mike exclaims. *"I'm pretty sure even my friends don't even like me all that much! So there we have it! **Nobody** likes Michael Andrew Wheeler! Game, set, match!"*

- *"I like you..."* Will whispers and the words are out before Will even realises he's the one talking.

- He watches as Mike's head whips around to stare at him intensely. Feels caught by the dark gaze. Mike is moving closer to him, sliding along the couch until he is directly next to Will. Making Will feel

pinned like a small struggling animal inside a trap.

- *“Do you really?”* Mike’s voice is deep and serious.

- All Will can manage is a slow nod.

- Mike bites his lip releasing it into a small predatory smile.

- *“Good. **Prove it.**”*

- And they are kissing. Will kind of knew it was coming this time. Doesn’t mean he is prepared for the harsh way Mike grips at his face and then his neck, moving eventually down to his shoulders jerking him forward. His sharp breaths that Mike seems to swallow as his mouth seals itself against Will’s. This isn’t the first time Will has french kissed, but this time there is nothing caressing or gentle about what Mike’s tongue is doing in his mouth. Will isn’t sure if he likes it. *Kissing shouldn’t feel like a fight should it?* he thinks dazedly.

- He tries to retreat from the kiss, to pull it back just a little. Make it something not so... not so *aggressive*. But Mike just grips at his shoulders all the more desperately.

- A throaty moan, a mirror to the one Mike uttered in the alleyway that night. The one that almost sounds like its laced with pain. And suddenly Will’s hand is being grabbed and unceremoniously thrust against the front of Mike’s jeans where he can feel the hard line of his erection.

- Whatever trance Will had been operating under breaks at that. He wrenches himself backwards, feels the hot lines of broken skin where Mike’s fingernails drag against his hand that he pulls away.

- Will tries to sound firm even though he currently feels like he might shatter if pushed too hard. *“You can’t keep doing this to me Mike. I-Its not appropriate and its not... **nice!**”*

- Mike looks... Mike looks upset... then he looks annoyed, then he looks ***thunderous.***

- *“**Fine.** Fuck off then faggot.”*

- "Mike..." Will could feel tears gathering in his eyes.

- *"No really. Fuck off. I thought all of you queers were meant to be begging to get something in your mouth. I must have the most prudish fag in town right in front of me here."*

- *"Stop it. You don't mean that. Any of it."* Will hated the quaver in his voice. The trembling in his shoulders.

- Mike looked murderous as his face twisted into a sneer.

- *"Oh boo hoo. Did you think I actually gave a shit about you faggot? I was just trying to get my dick wet. A mouth's a mouth after all. Sally doesn't let me do anal with her. Thought I might get to finally give it a go if I got you drooling enough for it..."*

- Will was feeling so much. Why was Mike being like this?! Lately he had been so... and Will had thought that maybe he was...

- Then again, why was he surprised?? Wasn't this consistent with the behaviour he had experienced for the last 4 or so years? Wasn't this par for the course?

- *"You're a coward"* Will finally managed to get out past his swollen tongue. He was sobbing openly now, he felt like the insides of his lungs were burning. *"You're just a scared little boy who doesn't like himself and so you take it out on others. Take it out on me! Fuck you Michael Wheeler. I hope you die!"*

- He was up and moving before he even recognised his legs were working. If Mike said anything after that, he did not hear it. It was like there was wind whistling in his ears and he could not grab his bike fast enough, could not pedal hard enough. He just needed to escape. Escape the words and the taunts and just... all of it.

- Escape Mike...

- Will spends the rest of the weekend in a strange funk. He replays the events over and over. Mike's face swims in front of his eyes. Angry, sad, lascivious, lonely, desperate.... Will feels sick to his stomach. He shouldn't have said what he said to Mike. No matter how horrible he was being, Will should have kept his cool. He knew

how unstable the teen was and yet he still pushed him. He just *had* to push him.

- Will knew no matter what, he had to talk to Mike on Monday. He would do it in front of all of his jock friends if he had to. He would take the abuse and the bruises. He just *had* to tell Mike that he didn't mean it, that he still cared.

- But... he couldn't find him... he didn't appear to be in any of his usual spots or in fact *anywhere* inside Hawkins High that bright sunny Monday. It made Will's teeth itch and his stomach tumble with anxiety. First period, second period, all the way through to lunch.

- Will gathers a tray of food but doesn't think he can eat. He's staring solemnly at his tater tots when he feels his friends slide into the table across from him.

- *"Will, did you hear about Mike Wheeler?"*

- *"What?"* Will's head snaps up, his eyes wide. *"What about him?!"*

- Lucas looks to Dustin who looks equally as surprised at Will's reaction.

- *"Dude's in hospital..."* Dustin says carefully.

- *"WHAT?! HOW? WHAT HAPPENED?!"*

- *"Dude whats wrong? Why do you care so much?!"*

- Will feels like he is going to throw up. ***"Tell me Dustin!"***

- *"I don't know all the details. Apparently he fell and cracked his head open or something."*

- *"Yeah I could hear the ambulance sirens from my place on Sunday morning"* Lucas added. *"Apparently it was some sort of bathroom freak accident. But like, not in the shower, he had his clothes on and everything. But apparently there was blood everywhere."*

- *"Oh God..."* Will's head is buried in his hands. His worst fears coming to fruition right in front of him. *"Oh God he did it he tried to*

do it. And its my fault." Because he *knows*. He knows it wasn't an accident. Mike tried to hurt himself and it was all Will's fault because he practically *told him* he wished he were dead.

- And then Will is *sure* he's going to throw up and so he flees the cafeteria, much to the astonishment of his friends. He empties the contents of his stomach into the nearest toilet with just a moment to spare. And even after there is nothing left to come up he still retches. Over and over again. It feels like punishment. Except its not enough. He hears the door open behind him but he just doesn't care.

- "*Will what is going on? What's gotten into you*" Will feels a soothing hand against his hair.

- "*You mean what has gotten **out** of him?*"

- "*Shut up Dustin.*"

- Will rolls over and looks up blearily at his two friends squished into the stall with him. "*Is he okay?*" he asks his voice trembling, dreading the answer.

- Dustin looks worried again. "*I-I don't know. Nobody does. But if something **really** bad had happened we'd hear about it right?*"

- "*Something really bad HAS happened. And its my fault. I need to go, I need to see him.*"

- "*Wait Will. Hold up. You're not making any sense. Since when do you give a shit about Wheeler?! He's one of the assholes that makes your life hell!*" Lovely Lucas. Beautiful, sensible Lucas. He just doesn't understand. Will needs to leave *right now*.

- "*I-I can't tell you. Its private. But I need to go see him. I think he tried to **do something** to himself and I think its because of something I did.*"

- "*What the fuck? What are you talking about?!*"

- But its actually Dustin who shushes Lucas, pushes past him to help Will will up. He gives Will a long probing look and then rubs his shoulders a few times. "*You'll explain to us later right?*"

- Will nods enthusiastically. *"Cover for me?"*

- Dustin smiles. *"Course bud."*

- And Will is flying. Well really, he *wished* he could fly. He pumps his legs as fast as they can go but it feels like he is riding through quicksand. So slow, what if its too late? What if Mike slips away from him?? He arrives at the hospital and in a daze demands the room number for Mike's room. He doesn't think he's ever been so curt and rude in his life. But there is just *no* time.

- Until he's in the doorway and he see's the figure in the bed and BLESSED HALLELUJAH the figure turns to look at him with wide, surprised eyes. If Will's cheeks weren't already flushed from exertion he knows he would be blushing right now. But its almost like he doesn't care.

- He rushes the bed. Thankfully there are no parents present but he thinks he would have done this even if they were.

- He pulls the boy on the bed into a hug. Clings to him. Lets desperate little cries creep out of his throat as he starts up a mantra of *"I'm sorry, I didn't mean it, I'm sorry."*

- He feels some fingers come up and kind of pat at the back of his head. *"Where the fuck did you come from?"* They are the same words Mike said two nights ago, but the tone is so different, so gentle.

- *"School?"* Will answers lamely as he leans back into a standing position.

- Mike chuckles slightly. His eyes wandering to the corner of the room.

- *"I heard about your accident. W-what... what happened?"*

- Mike shrugged, still staring at the edge of the room. *"Head trauma. I fell and my head hit the edge of the bathtub. It was stupid."*

- *"Bullshit."*

- *"What?"*

- *"I call bullshit. Tell me what **really** happened Mike."*

- Mike met his gaze and his face kind of looked like he had sucked on a lemon. *"I'm telling the truth goddammit! That's what happened!! Besides what difference does it make?! Does it really matter if I tell you that after you left I got stuck into a bottle of vodka? Or that I got it into my head to take a bunch of my mother's sleeping pills? Or that I'm now on suicide watch and they won't let me go home? No! It makes fuck-all difference! Its not like you care you fucking son of a bitch!"*

- *"Don't be thick Mike. Of course I care. What do you think I'm doing here?!"*

- It's at this point that Karen Wheeler comes wandering through the room door, styrofoam coffee in hand and Mike just rounds on her. She looks stunned when she see's Will standing beside her son's bed. But Mike is having none of it.

- *"Get the fuck out Karen! Out! Byers and I are having a conversation!"*

- Karen's mouth falls open at her son's violent outburst but she retreats without saying a word.

- Mike watches her go then turns his icy gaze on Will. *"Right. Like I was gonna say, I know **exactly** why you are here. It's guilt. Guilt for what you... what you said right before you left. Don't try and dress it up as anything else. You just feel like maybe I did it because of what you said."*

- *"Well... did you?"* Its probably the least tactful thing to say but Will is feeling a bit too raw from, well, from *everything*.

- Mike fiddles with the bandage on his head, avoiding eyecontact. *"Don't flatter yourself. I was thinking about killing myself **way** before your candyass came along."*

- *"But **why**?! How- how could you?"*

- *"Because I hate my life alright?! You have no idea what it is like to be me. I'm not a good person. I bring exactly nothing positive to this world. It's like Nancy says, I'm rotten. Good for nothing. And apparently a faggot on top of it all!"*

- Mike's last sentence hangs in the air, sharp like a knife. Filling the room with a heavy tension. The unspoken truth that felt like it had been standing in the corner of the room of every single interaction that Mike and Will had had in the last month or so. Will had known this very thing for so long but to hear Mike speak it... to see from the look of miserable horror on his face how it was slowly tearing him apart. It broke Will's heart.

- Slowly, carefully, like dealing with a spooked animal, Will sat in the chair beside the bed. *"It's called being gay Mike. And it's not a bad thing."*

- *"It's- it's disgusting..."* but even Mike sounded half-hearted and defeated, the words rasping out as though on autopilot.

- *"Well. I'm gay. Do you think I'm disgusting?"* Will regretted the question as soon as he said it. He knew the answer. Had had it spat at him on many occasions by this very person. Maybe it would feel different this time though, now that the *real* truth was out in the open for once. He braced himself for the hurt.

- *"No..."*

- Will eyes raised to find dark brown ones fixed upon his face.

"I-I don't think you're disgusting... I never did... I think you're-"

- But he never got to finish that sentence. From outside the room both boys heard the hooting and hollering that could only be achieved by adolescent boys. Many adolescent boys.

- *"WHEELER!"*

- *"WE'RE COMING FOR YOU WHEELER!"*

- *"WHERE YOU AT YOU PUSSY?!"*

- Will recognised the voices of some of the notable figures of the Hawkins High Senior Basketball team. They sounded close.

- He suddenly felt a bruising grip on his forearm where it was lying on the mattress. Stunned, he turned to see Mike staring at him, fear

in his eyes.

- *"Hide!"* he hissed. *"They can't see you here. Quick, the bathroom."*

- Will is about to protest. Is getting ready to argue but Mike grips him harder, almost looking like he is about to cry. *"Please Will."*

- Its probably the first time Mike has said his name in... well... *years*. And so Will quickly darts into the adjoining bathroom, glad for his forethought to grab his backpack too. It's gotta only be seconds later, just as he is sliding the lock home that he hears the obnoxiously loud entrance of what must be about six people.

- *"WHEELER!!"*

"HOW YOU DOING YA FAG!"

"YOU LOOK LIKE SHIT!"

"HEY THANKS FOR GIVING US AN EXCUSE TO CUT CLASS!"

- The comments are a-plenty. Will cringes as he takes a seat on the closed toilet seat lid. He almost feels ill when he hears Mike's voice, so unlike the soft tone of just moments before, greeting his "friends".

- The back and forth is not particularly interesting. Will quickly grows bored of it. Mike spews his story of slipping over in the bathroom again. One of the anonymous jocks accuses him of trying to suck his own dick and that's how he fell. Another one asked what pain meds he's on and whether he could score him some. And yet another truly romantic soul asks if it's okay for him to claim Sally if Mike dies because apparently that *"pussy is tight as shit"*.

- Will rolled his eyes and gritted his teeth. He didn't know how Mike could do this day in and day out. The Mike who guffawed along with those brainless wonders and slapped their hands in highfives and told them to *"fuck off from my girl, that's my piece of ass"*... was so, so different from the Mike that sometimes would come out around Will. The Mike that reminded him achingly of the little nerd kid with the gap where his two front teeth should be and the lego Millennium Falcon figure that he had painstakingly put together all by himself. How... how was Mike not exhausted from the whole thing?? Having

to act like that every, single day.

- Will can almost begin to understand how Mike's path could have led him to where he was now. Will might not have an easy life, but at least he had people who truly loved and understood him. Who did Mike have...?

- Not one of his so-called friends have even asked how he's feeling, whether he's doing better. The closest they have gotten is asking him if he will be at practice this week, to which Mike answers *"No. Doc says I have to take a break from basketball for awhile..."* The responses range from *"Fuck that!"* to *"You're gonna get as soft as that Byers queer."*

- It makes Will mad. Not the comment about him. Just the fact that *he's* the one hiding in the bathroom when it's so glaringly evident that these boys don't give a shit about Mike. *He's* the one Mike doesn't want to be seen with, like he's some sort of disease. It's not fucking fair!

- Eventually, Mike's company leaves. Will hears Karen come back in for a moment and Mike sends her away again. Then he hears him call *"You can come out now."*

- Will enters the room. He's still feeling weird. He looks at the boy in front of him who is staring stubbornly back at him. Daring him to judge. *I hate this boy, but I also kind of love him. But maybe that's not the best thing for me...* Will thinks forlornly.

- *"You have shit friends."*

- *"I know."*

- *"They're not real friends."*

- *"I know."*

- *You should not hang out with them anymore."*

- *"I..."*

- *"You could come sit with me Lucas and Dusty again?"*

- "Will..."

- "Just think about it. And you should... you should start writing again. Maybe keep a journal or something. Something to get all of those thoughts out of your head. I dunno..."

- "My therapist said the same thing."

- "Hmm."

- "Yeah..."

- Silence befalls them. Will sways in place, not really knowing what to do but feeling like he *should* do something.

- "You're going to be okay you know." he offers quietly, trying to sound confident in his words.

- "Sure." Mike doesn't seem convinced as he stares down at his blanketed lap, suddenly finding his fingers very interesting.

- "You **are**. Things are shitty right now. But..." Will inhales deeply, thrusting himself out into the open one last time. Giving the stupid boy in front of him a clear target to shoot him down once again. "... you have me alright? I'm here for you... if you want."

- "Okay." Mike doesn't look up. But its something at least.

- "Okay... I'm gonna go..."

- "Okay..."

- Will gives an awkward wave, a hug seems a bit too much right now, and exits the hospital room. The interaction leaves an odd taste in his mouth, but deep down he knows he can only do so much. It's up to Mike now. No more pushing.

- Mike is out of school for the rest of the week. Not that Will is looking out for him or anything. He doesn't go back and visit him again, is not even sure if he's been discharged from hospital or not. These days he's living on faith a lot. Lucas and Dustin grill his ass and he tries to be honest with them. He doesn't out Mike, but tells them

pretty much everything else. They're his best friends after all. They sit there with stunned expressions as the whole story unfolds.

- But that's nothing compared to the looks on their faces on the following Monday when a nervous voice speaks from behind Will's slumped form at the lunch table.

- *"Can I sit here?"*

- Will turns and is met with dark brown, hopeful eyes.

Author's Note:

Ba-BAM! I have no idea what the fuck this was. And I am sorry for the weird formatting. Oh and the angst. Very sorry about that. But it would make my day if you would let me know what you thought! Thank you. Hope you enjoyed. :)